

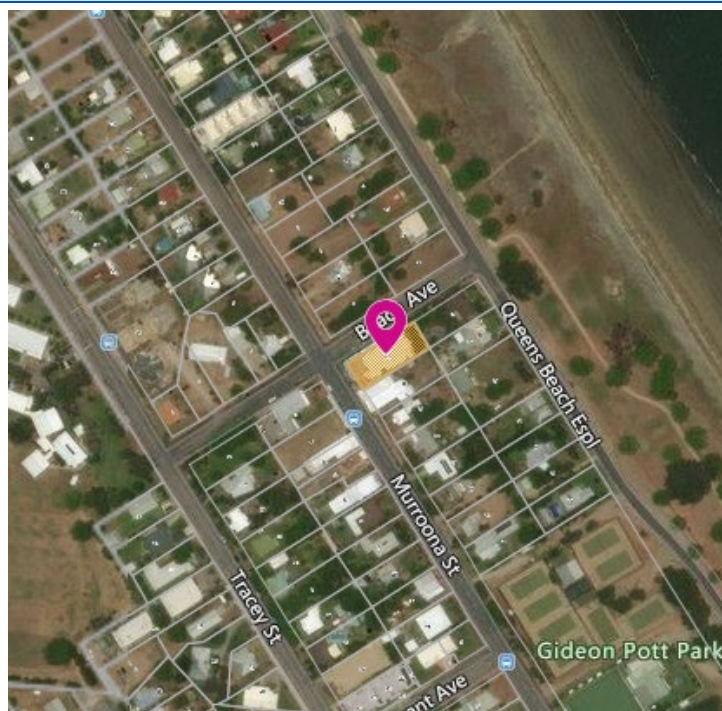
SUMMERGARDEN THEATRE TWIN CINEMA

Address	40 Murroona Road (corner Beach Avenue), Bowen
Lot Plan	41B6637
Coordinates	E: 628581 N: 7790660
Integrity	Fair
Condition	Good
Statutory Listings	Nil
Non-Statutory Listings	Nil
References	DERM. Statewide Survey Draft Research Report, 2007. Townsville Daily Bulletin Friday 10 August 1951 p 4.

Street View



Location Map



Physical Description

The Summergarden Theatre is located on the corner of Murroona Road and Beach Avenue, Queens Beach, about 5km northwest from the Bowen Central Business District. It is a substantial building that occupies most of the allotment, with the entrance facing Murroona Street.

Summergarden Theatre is a rectangular building constructed in concrete block frame, rendered and painted white with blue trim. The main auditorium has a gable roof with a fly tower at the rear. A separate skillion roof extension is located on the western side of the building.

The main elevation, which comprises the foyer and upper-level residence, has a prominent curved balcony supported on four concrete pillars. The balcony is enclosed to a height of about two metres. The enclosure is of solid concrete blocks to about one metre high, the remaining infill comprising decorative screen blocks. A narrow awning surrounds this section near the top. There is a shallow parapet on three elevations above this.

Large, double, glass paneled doors provide access to the building via the main entrance beneath the balcony. A grill in each frosted glass door panel divides it into diamond shaped sections. There is a frosted glass transom above the doors and frosted glass side lights on either side. The transom is divided into square panels and each side light is divided into two columns of rectangular panels. The door frame and grills are painted white. On either side of the entrance are two large, square, fixed windows.

Historical Context

The Summergarden Theatre is a purpose-built picture theatre constructed in 1948 at Queens Beach near Bowen. Its construction represents the expansion of the district, and the gradual development of the region's economic base to incorporate tourism and holiday makers post World War II. The growing popularity of films in the early twentieth century led to the construction of many open-air theatres or simple shed-like buildings as permanent venues for showing film. Although picture theatres or 'picture palaces' were owned by theatre chains in capital cities, most small picture theatres in regional Queensland were independently owned.

Initially the Summergarden Theatre was an open-air auditorium. It was built by H.H. (Douglas) Harrison, a grazier from Muttaborra, near Longreach, in partnership with long-time Bowen cinema proprietors Sam and Ethyl Kerr. Opened in 1948, it did not officially have a license to operate until 1951.

Post-war shortages in building materials meant supplies were not available for constructing a cinema. This problem was overcome by constructing a concrete residence at the front of the block with the open-air auditorium at the rear. The rear section comprised bush timber poles and tarpaulins were placed over the poles to shelter patrons from rain. The ground sloped towards a screen that was made of fibro sheets.

During the 1950s a permanent roof was constructed over the rear section. Further changes were made after a cyclone damaged the roof and screen in 1958.

The theatre changed hands in May 1962 when it was bought by Bowen businessman Clive Bauer in partnership with Ben and Phyl De Luca. As television began to displace picture theatres as the most popular form of entertainment during the 1970s, many single auditorium picture theatres were demolished, closed down or redeveloped. In the early 1970s the De Lucas' installed a stage facility in what is now the main auditorium for live theatre performances. This allowed the theatre to become a major venue in North Queensland for Australian and overseas artists.

The Summergarden Theatre operated as a single auditorium picture theatre and theatre until 1995 when the De Lucas' constructed a smaller, second cinema to create a twin cinema complex. This enabled them to screen more movies more frequently. This development of a twin theatre followed the pattern of picture theatre adaptation, albeit it somewhat later. New styles of theatres that developed from the mid-1960s included twin theatres and multiplex theatre (with up to eight screens) that were integrated into shopping centres. Megaplex theatres, which have more than eight screens, developed from the 1980s onwards.

The Summergarden Theatre has also been used for a variety of social and civic purposes including wedding receptions, birthday and Christmas parties, union meetings, election rallies, health education lectures, school break-ups and festival activities. However, its principal purpose remains as the venue for the screening of movies and stage shows from Australia and overseas for the Bowen, Whitsunday, Proserpine and Collinsville districts.

Historical Significance

Criteria A - *the place is important in demonstrating the evolution or pattern of the region's history*

The Summergarden Theatre at Queens Beach is important in demonstrating the evolution of picture theatres in the region, and of independent picture theatres in regional Queensland. Although modified over time, it remains an important example of entertainment facilities developed in the region before the advent of television that remains in use.

Criteria B - *the place demonstrates rare, uncommon or endangered aspects of the region's cultural heritage*

Though modified from a single auditorium theatre to a twin cinema, the Summergarden Theatre is important as a rare surviving purpose built 1940s Queensland regional theatre which still functions as a cinema.

Criteria D - *the place is important in demonstrating the principal characteristics of a particular class of cultural places*

The Summergarden Theatre is important in illustrating the principle characteristics of a small, independent, single auditorium picture theatre of the mid-20th century. These include: the prominent façade and entry, foyer with ticket window and confectionary counter, projection box, and relatively intact large main auditorium.

Criteria I - *The place has a strong or special association with a particular community or cultural group for social, cultural or spiritual reasons important to the region*

The Summergarden Theatre has a strong association, extending from the late 1940s until the present, with the communities of the districts of Bowen, Whitsunday, Proserpine and Collinsville as a focal point of social life. The theatre functions not only as a cinema, but also as a venue for other forms of popular entertainment and important social occasions for which the place is a focus for memories.



